

Mental Health Checklist



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Children's Mental Health Checklist

Disasters can be particularly traumatic for children. This checklist can assist parents and teachers determine if professional counseling is needed.



The checklist was developed under the auspices of Project Cope, a federally funded (FEMA) crisis counseling program activated in Santa Cruz, California.

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Children's Mental Health Checklist

Disasters can be particularly traumatic for children. Sometimes, it can be difficult to determine the extent of the psychological trauma, and whether or not professional mental health service is needed.

This checklist, provided by FEMA, is one way to assess a child's mental health status.

Add up the pluses and minuses to obtain a final score. If the child scores more than 35, it is suggested you seek a mental health consultation.

1. Has the child had more than one major stress within a year BEFORE this disaster, such as a death in the family, a loss, a major physical illness or divorce?

If yes: +5

2. Does the child have a network of supportive, caring persons who continue to relate to him daily?

If yes: -10

3. Has the child had to move out of his house because of the disaster?

If yes: +5

4. Was there reliable housing within one week of an earthquake, fire, or other disaster, with resumption of the usual household members living together?

If yes: -10

5. Is the child showing severe disobedience or delinquency?

If yes: +5

Subtotal of this column: _____

Has the child shown any of the following as NEW behavior for more than three weeks after the disaster?

6. Nightly states of terror? +5
7. Waking from dreams, confused or in a sweat? +5
8. Difficulty concentrating? +5
9. Extreme irritability? +5
10. Loss of previous achievements in toilet or speech? +5
11. Onset of stuttering or lisping? +5
12. Persistent severe anxiety or phobias? +5
13. Obstinacy? +5
14. New or exaggerated fears? +5
15. Rituals or compulsions? +5
16. Severe clinging to adults? +5
17. Inability to fall asleep or stay asleep? +5
18. Startling at any reminder of the disaster? +5
19. Loss of ambition for the future? +5
20. Loss of pleasure in usual activities? +5

Subtotal of this column: _____

21. Loss of curiosity? +5
22. Persistent sadness or crying? +5
23. Persistent headaches or stomachaches? +5
24. Hypochondria? +5
25. Has anyone in the child's immediate family been killed or severely injured in the disaster (including injury to the child)? +15

Subtotal of this column: _____

Total for all three columns: _____

NOTE: Preoccupation with death, unusual accident proneness or suicidal threats are reasons for immediate consultations. It is also recommended that any child who has been seriously injured or who has lost a parent, sibling or caregiver by death have a psychological evaluation.